100 in Congress Bid Reagan Take Up Rights Issue in Timor

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 10 — More than 100 members of Congress, led by Representative Tony P. Hall, Democrat of Ohio, have signed a letter to President Reagan urging him "to add the suffering of the people of East Timor to America's foreign policy agenda."

The letter asks the President to help in getting officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross into East Timor, a former Portuguese colony that was invaded by Indonesian forces in 1975.

The East Timorese, the majority of whom are Roman Catholic, have resisted Indonesian rule. From occasional press reports, information reaching church officials and diplomatic sources have come indications that more than 100,000 East Timorese have died since then.

The letter, which is scheduled to be sent to the President next week, asserts that "like Afghanistan, East Timor is the scene of massive violations of human rights and widespread human suffering."

"In August of this year," the letter said, "Indonesian armed forces commander Gen. Benny Murdani stated that there would be 'no mercy' for those in East Timor who continue to actively resist Indonesian rule."

The letter said that a report from church sources recently "described a massacre of 200 East Timorese villagers by Indonesia troops." Amnesty International has reported that "the Indonesia military has systematically tortured and summarily executed many prisoners in East Timor since 1975."

The "latest offensive," the letter said, "comes at a time when the International Committee of the Red Cross has been denied unrestricted access to East Timor." The signers asked the President to assist the Red Cross to gain entry for its officials.

Both Portugal, the former colonial power, and Australia, a neighbor of Indonesia, have shown concern over East Timor, the letter said. "We hope you will work with Portugal and Australia to develop creative policies to address the underlying causes of the ongoing human suffering in East Timor," it said.

Attempts to reach Indonesian Embassy spokesmen for comment by telephone today were unsuccessful. In the past, the Indonesian Government has repeatedly denied reports of human rights abuses on the island.

DO NOT FORGET THE NEEDIEST!

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